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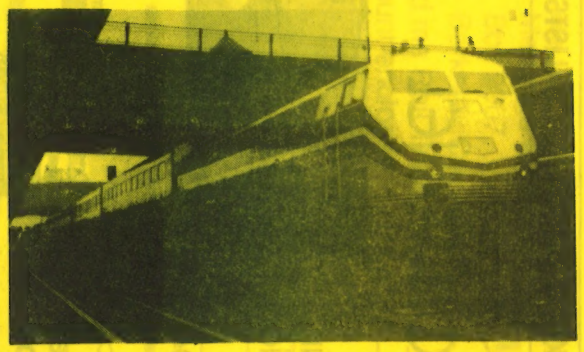

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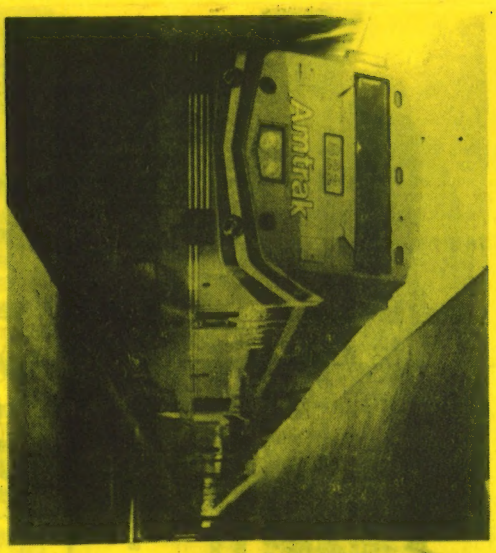

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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

FIRST TWILIGHT SHORELINER

ON THE COVER

Breaking the ceremonial ribbon for the first run of Amtrak's TWILIGHT SHORELINER at Richmond VA on July 11. Amtrak employee Rocky Swingle is holding one end of a purple ribbon as P42 locomotive 91 with train 76 breaks through.

(Rear cover:) Viewliner car 62048 with imaginative window adornments. Car is dedicated to service on the TWILIGHT SHORELINER. Photos by John P. Stith. See report on the new train service in this issue.

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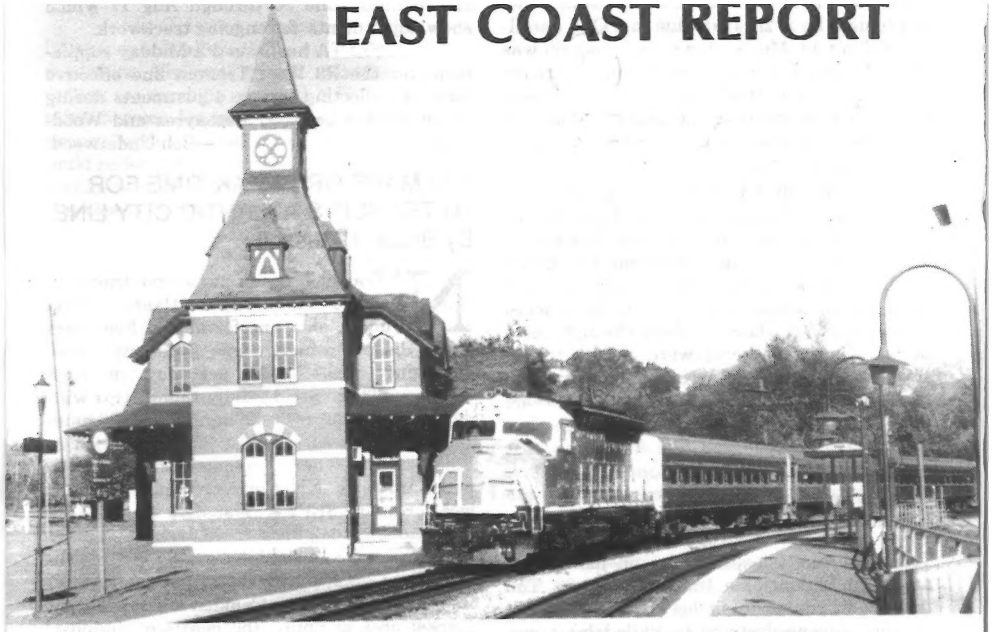
EAST COAST REPORT



MARC train no. 273 slows to make the stop at historic Point of Rocks MD station on an afternoon run to Brunswick MD on May 19, 1997. MARC continues to maintain good ridership, and plans to extend service to Frederick MD via a branch line south of Frederick at Frederick Junction by the year 2000. MARC trains will head west from Frederick Junction to Point of Rocks via the Old Main Line, and then east to Washington on the Metropolitan Sub. Photo and caption by Alex Mayes.

All Aboard the TWILIGHT SHORELINER

By Bob Underwood

Friday night July 18 found me at New Haven Union Station at about 10:40. The ticket windows and information window were closed. The Solari board listed train 67 "Northeast Direct". If this "new train 67" is now the TWILIGHT SHORELINER and vigorously promoted by Amtrak, the board should read "TWILIGHT SHORELINER".

Exactly on time the train came down track 8. It had F40s 258 & 378, MHC 1538, coach 44145, cafe 20044, coaches 21687 and 21634, Custom Class 44943, Twilight Lounge 28391 and Viewliner sleeper 62048 "Wayside View". The lounge and sleeper are both dedicated for Shoreliner service and have special exterior decals. The windows are covered with stars, clouds and planets and really look impressive. The sleeper was sold out, too. I'm on a tight budget, so was in "plain coach".

I took a seat in the forward end of the cafe. The HEP came on and blue flags came down at 11:10, 5mins before departure time. Highball was at 11:17, 2mins late. Then a screech stop. A young lady bound for New London was found and she was walked back to the rear of the train, which was still on the low-level part of the platform. Highball again, now 5mins late. Soon we passed train 178, which was about 10mins late.

As the promos say, ask for a pillow and it's yours. We left Stamford at 12:06am, 3mins late. I missed seeing the Hell Gate bridge view, as I was sleeping and woke up when the conductor roused New York-bound folks in the seat ahead of me.

We slammed and banged over all the crossovers at Harold Interlocking, and then sailed into the tunnel. Arrival in NY was 9mins early at 12:52. The cafe attendant was kept fairly busy and even stayed open during the NY layover. All too often the cafe is closed during a station layover, even when HEP is maintained.

The train is scheduled to sit in the station for 29mins. With all this time, how about slowing down, especially on the crossovers? We don't want anyone tossed out of bed! I waited a while and then went out onto the platform. The mail work was all done, so I was able to walk up and get the engine numbers. AEM7s 919 and 922 were in charge. Normally

train 66/76 is in the station at the same time, but tonight he is 2hrs late due to a CSX derailment, I'm told. Maybe that's why train 66 was 3hrs, 41mins late into New Haven Thursday morning. I was told that the derailment occurred in an interlocking in Crystal City VA and that switches are temporarily hand-thrown, causing many delays.

We left NY at 1:30am, on time, and ran rapidly to Newark, arriving there 10mins ahead of departure time. We left Newark at 1:55, on time. What the...? Someone has turned on the overhead lights. I see the lights are still off in the car ahead. The lights in the coaches behind were on when I walked through them in NY. Numerous seats were occupied with sleeping passengers. It's interesting to note that each car has its own temperature. One was warm, another cool, and still another downright cold. I myself like a warm car at night. The cafe car was just right in New Haven, still okay at NY, then seemed to head into a deep freeze.

We left Metropark at 2:11, and at Trenton I was asleep. I woke up just before arrival at Philadelphia 1min late at 3:06. The train is scheduled to sit here for one hour. I suppose anyone destined to Philadelphia can remain in the coach until close to departure time. This hadn't occurred to me, so I had bought a ticket to Wilmington, which has a 4:30am arrival—still early, but not as bad as 3:05am, especially when your friend will meet you around 8:30!

We left Philadelphia at 4:06, 1min late, and reached Wilmington at 4:26. Train 12 was across the platform and left at 4:27. It was the end of the trip for me, but a most interesting one. No switching was done at Philadelphia, but I was told that they will soon have a mail contract which calls for several cars of mail to be added here.

Addenda: The coach seat pockets contained large Welcome Aboard the Twilight Shoreliner folders, and also Shoreliner questionnaires with many questions. One omission was that there was no question about the sleeping car attendant. The questionnaire is pre-addressed to David Nogar, general manager of NortheastDirect at 30th St Station.

NJ Transit has issued a new NE Corridor line timetable effective May11, revised June 30.

The Long Island RR has new timetables for Oyster Bay, Port Jefferson, Far Rockaway and Montauk branches effective May 19, revised July '97 (no specific date is shown).

Metro-North has new timetables, not revisions, for the Harlem, Hudson and New Haven lines June 30 through Aug 17 which show adjustments for ongoing trackwork.

SEPTA has issued a Midday supplement for the R3 West Trenton line effective July 14, reflecting service adjustments during brush cutting between Bethayres and Woodburne. —Bob Underwood.

IT'S MAKE OR BREAK TIME FOR NJ TRANSIT'S ATLANTIC CITY LINE

By Bruce J. Russell

NJ Transit has run passenger trains on its 60-mile long Atlantic City-Philadelphia line for almost five years with disappointingly low ridership, now averaging about 2500 per day in each direction. There are 13 daily round trips with departures about every 90mins from 5:30am to 1am. All begin and end at 30th St Station in Philadelphia, where connections are made with Amtrak's NE Corridor and commuter locals run by SEPTA. Transfers can also be made to Philadelphia's rapid transit, subway surface streetcars, and buses. By getting on and off at Lindenwold, riders can use PATCO to and from downtown Camden and the 8th and Market area of Philly, the hearts of the business district, where most new office buildings are concentrated.

In short, NJ Transit's Atlantic City line provides superb connections for people going to and from the Quaker City. Yet patronage remains poor. The average ridership for each train, which consists of a diesel loco and two or three Comet-type coaches, is 90, the equivalent of two bus loads. The route is NJ Transit's worst performer, behind the Boonton and Raritan Valley lines. (The Montclair and Princeton branches, both electrified, are considered part of the Morris & Essex and NE Corridor respectively; both carry far less than 2500 passengers.)

In 1981 the service, then provided by Conrail, which had succeeded the Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines in South Jersey in 1976, consisted of three round trips from Atlantic City to Lindenwold, where passengers transferred to PATCO, which had begun service in 1969 using former PRSL right of way to Camden. Although casino gambling had been in effect for three years, no service was provided on weekends. In addition, the station had been relocated in 1964 from a 1930s terminal, later converted into a bus station and recently demolished, situated three blocks from the Boardwalk to a small shack-like structure in a former coach yard near a crime- and drug-infested public housing project. When the three rush-hour trains, each consisting of one RDC with dirty windows, arrived between 5:00 and 7pm, Conrail police were always present for security.

In Oct 1981 service was "temporarily" suspended, allegedly because of poor track conditions. The real reason was that it was costing too much to run, and NJT's then executive director Jerome Premo who later left the agency "under a cloud" decided that the losses could no longer be justified. A couple of months earlier, service from Lindenwold to Cape May and Ocean City had been abolished, supposedly due also to less than ideal track.

For many years, rolling stock on both the Atlantic City and Cape May lines had been provided by former PRSL RDCs built in the early 1950s by the Budd Company. They had the ability to ride well over track set atop cinder ballast or replete with low joints caused by lack of routine maintenance. They were ideal for South Jersey routes.

Several rail passenger advocacy groups such as the NJ ARP, an affiliate of NARP, criticized NJT for not marketing its Atlantic City line once casino gambling began in 1978. They believed that if the service had been expanded to include weekends and aggressively promoted, increases in usage would have been certain. They also lobbied for its re-extension into 30th St Station. In 1970 it had been cut back to Lindenwold by the PRSL, supposedly to save on charges levied by Penn Central for use of the NE Corridor from Frankford Jct to 30th St. Thus, direct NEC or other mass transit connections were no longer possible. Instead, everyone had to use PATCO. This resulted in an immediate loss of 50% of ridership, since people had to go all the way to 8th & Market Sts to begin their journeys, not to mention changing at Lindenwold.

In the late 1980s, bowing to political pressure from South Jersey, including from Congressman Jim Florio, Amtrak announced that it would fund rehab of the former PRSL Atlantic City line and provide direct service from NYC and Washington DC, plus some locals from 30th St. Unfortunately, by now the bus industry had carved a niche for itself in this market.

About two years after the Amtrak debut, NJT also began running trains, at first from Lindenwold and later from 30th St. In 1993 a station was built at Cherry Hill between Lindenwold and the Delair Bridge, which carries trains across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. Between the two railroads, there was a respectable level of frequency, a far cry from the 1970s' three round trips.

Interestingly, when the line was rebuilt by Amtrak crews using automated equipment, the decision was made not to reconstruct the second mainline track that had been lifted in 1964 for economy reasons. Instead, single iron would be retained, but with strategically located passing sidings and modern dispatching. This would reduce maintenance costs. Thus far the situation has been acceptable, with few delays caused by meets at sidings. Dispatching of trains over the Atlantic City line is done from 30th St Station. While welded rail was installed in place of the old 1930s jointed-type, all the existing grade crossings were left in place. Towns bordering the line continue to complain of noise caused by trains blowing for the crossings, as well as the safety hazard of fast-moving passenger trains. When service ended in 1981, many believed that within a few years freight operation would also cease and the right of way would be converted into a hiking trail. As of now, a minuscule amount of freight is still transported by a local shortline operator. Trains run twice a week.

As reported previously in RTN, Amtrak operation of the line lasted four years and was finally discontinued because of dismal ridership and lack of support from the casino industry. Another factor was the poor location of the station.

NJT is now the sole owner and operator of the line. Its passengers are almost exclusively casino employees who transfer to free buses up arrival in Atlantic City. Fares are set artificially low--$6.00 one way from Philly with discounts for multi-rides. Except at Atlantic City and Philadelphia, there are no ticket agents; platform-mounted machines do the vending. While there are 13 round trips during the 5:30am-1am period, they are not geared to residents of the NJ suburbs of Philly who commute into that city's downtown. Only two morning and two afternoon trains have times convenient to traditional commuters crossing the Delaware. Instead, the trains serve employees of casinos plus some occasional or casual riders transferring from either Amtrak or SEPTA at 30th St. This reporter believes that some trips should originate at points such as Haddonfield and run into Philly during morning rush hours. These schedules should also be marketed as commuter trains in towns such as Haddonfield and Cherry Hill.

Why casino employees continue to use their own cars rather than the rail line isn't hard to figure out. South Jersey roads are not as congested as those in northern NJ counties, at least not near Atlantic City. Also, gas is cheap and most casinos provide free parking on site for their employees.

In June a new multi-million dollar convention center opened adjacent to NJT's 5-year old Atlantic City rail terminal. This station was actually designed to form part of the western wall of the enormous structure which will replace the existing 1929-era auditorium on the Boardwalk. It's larger by 50% than Manhattan's Javits Convention Center and

took two years to build. There is direct access from the train station waiting room to the entrance foyer of the new glass and steel structure where the Miss America Pageant will now be shifted.

In addition, it's expected to attract hundreds of shows and exhibitions and hopefully allow Atlantic City to expand its economic base beyond casinos and gambling. Having a diversified economy is a key to the town's long-term revival. The administration has tried to insure its success by cleaning up the neighborhood, rearranging roads, installing a new tree-lined boulevard, closing the nearby housing project and re-siting the bus terminal—curiously, closer to the Boardwalk. New non-casino hotels are also slated for this part of the city, with one nearly completed.

NJT hopes that the new convention center will induce more people to use the trains. With direct walk-in access, there appears to be no reason why anyone would want to drive and hunt for a parking place when travel by rail is so much more convenient.

A decision to shut down the Atlantic City line by NJ Transportation Commissioner Frank Wilson was put on hold pending completion of the center and its first full year of usage. Ridership will be closely monitored. If there is substantial growth up to 5000 riders, the route's future is secure. But if another year passes with the trains, all of which require a crew of three, still averaging only 90 people apiece, NJT will probably declare the route a lost cause.

South Jersey politicians are still strongly supporting the line and often mention the amount of NJT spending for projects in the north such as Allied Junction and the Hudson-Bergen light rail plan. If service is eliminated, NJT also will have less incentive to work with Bombardier in developing a self-propelled railcar using a Comet-type coach body for use on light density routes such as this. Running as single units, such trains require only two crew members.

●●●

We reported last issue on the CSX freight/ Amtrak accident at Crystal City VA (railroad location "Ro") on July 8. According to a VA ARP report and other sources in CSX, as northbound intermodal freight Q17607 passed Richmond, the yardmaster saw a leaning piggyback trailer, and on inspection found it loaded with rolls of paper which had shifted. He notified CSX operations center in Jacksonville FL and was told to let the train proceed. He did so, and notified the train crew. As the freight moved on, two other crews spotted the trailer and notified CSX operations, to be told twice more to let it go. Approaching Ro, on an S-curve, the freight car derailed and was being dragged along the track on its frame from that point on. At the derailment site, the derailed freight truck followed a crossover to the opposite main line and hit the southbound Amtrak train, #93, the VIRGINIAN. The Amtrak engineer had seen flying debris and had slowed his train. The impact uncoupled the last two cars of #93, but was not strong enough to cause major injuries. If the Amtrak train had been just a minute earlier, it would have avoided the collision; just a few seconds later and a major accident with possible Amtrak fatalities would have resulted.

The culpability of CSX management in this incident was sufficient for FRA Administrator Jolene Molitoris to call in CSX chairman John Snow for an unusual Sunday meeting (July 13) to question the corporate culture that would permit this accident-waiting-to-happen to be ignored after ample and multiple warnings.

Damage estimates were $110,000 to Amtrak equipment, $6000 to track, $370,000 to signals and $64,000 to CSX equipment. Ro tower is at the junction with the former PRR Roslyn branch.

●●●

The Evening Metropolitan, train 169, has been cut back to Philadelphia Su-Th only with a 1pm Philly arrival Mo-Fr, becoming the equipment for a new train, #159, **Capitol Sunrise**, lv Philly 6:10am and ar Washington 8:10am to fill the replacement commuter-type service. It includes a stop at Perryville MD for MARC-only psgrs. The stop is not shown in the Revised NE schedule issued effec-tive July 10. For northbd service, train 196 **Bowery** has been renumbered 198 with a new departure time of 10:30pm from Washington, ar NY 2:10am daily. The old departure time of #196 is dropped, as well as trains 75 **James River** and 96 **Tidewater**, Sun-only trains to and from Newport News VA.—Jim Langan.

Washington Metro manager Richard White said in July that the system is seeing ridership increases, reversing a decline that lasted from 1990 to 1996. From Jan 1 to Jun 15, average weekday patronage was 503,-794, compared to 499,427 in the same 1996 period. The new Franconia-Springfield station has passed projections, and in its first week of operation, daily trip total ran from 8873 to 11,-000, while 30,000 people used the station traveling to and from the July 4 fireworks on the National Mall. The numbers of riders seen in the first week exceed projections made for the year 2010. WMATA called the station "an incredible success story".

RAIL CANADA

A CN freight derailment July 15 disrupted VIA rail service in Northern Manitoba. The line between Churchill and Thompson was blocked, and VIA said that local service between those locations had been canceled, while service continued between Winnipeg and Thompson, but on an altered schedule. VIA said it had chartered a plane to handle passengers with reservations for through travel between Churchill and Thompson on July 15 & 16.

The Vermont legislature in June passed a bill (H 530) that contains the following directive to the Agency of Transportation regarding resumption of rail service to Montreal: "The General Assembly directs the Agency of Transportation to work with the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) and other interested parties to investigate the feasibility of resuming Amtrak passenger train service between Vermont and the City of Montreal".

VIA ads have appeared this summer announcing reduced fares on its Eastern Transcontinental trains. From June 1 to June 26, a 40% savings applied, while from June 27 to Sep 1 a 25% savings is in effect (except for Halifax-Moncton, which still has the 40% deal). And in economy class, kids 2-12 travel free between June 1 and Sep 1 (one child per adult). For example, the current discount fare Halifax-London is $167; Halifax-Ottawa $128; and Halifax-Quebec City $92. Further info can be found at VIA Rail's Web site, which is: www.viarail.ca

MIDWEST REPORT

The KANSAS CITY MULE, train 301, at the St. Louis MO Amtrak station on April 7. Photo by Gene Poon.

Metra placed a "new and improved" timetable for Milwaukee North service in effect July 20. The new schedule includes two new westbound express trains, #2127 leaving Chicago at 4:39pm and running nonstop Western Avenue-Deerfield on the way to Fox Lake, and #2145 departing Chicago 6:20pm and running non-stop Western Avenue-Glenview on the way to Grayslake. Eastbound, new train 2124 departs Fox Lake at 7:35am and makes it into Union Station at 8:51am. Also new are weekday evening locals #2153 & 2156. One evening round trip was added to the Sat schedule, and Sunday service expanded from 7 to 9 trains in each direction. Amtrak's SDP40F locomotives may be long gone, but their close cousins, Metra's 1974-built F40Cs, still operate daily on the Milwaukee North and West lines despite reports they are next to be replaced.

Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar signed the bill restricting train speeds through Fox River Grove IL to 50mph on July 24. The measure had been sought by state reps in that area after the Oct 1995 collision of a 70mph UP commuter train with a school bus which killed seven high school students. "We must take every precaution to guard against future tragedies" like this accident, Edgar said in a prepared statement. Both the IL DOT and the IL Commerce Commission opposed the bill, citing studies that show train speed is not a factor in most crossing collisions and the fact that the 1995 accident would not have been avoided if the train were operating at 50mph. But politics, not reason and logic, dictated this governmental overreaction.—Mike Blaszak.

WEST COAST REPORT

CAPITOL train 721 pulls into Martinez CA on March 13, 1996. On that occasion it was using a full Superliner diner as a snack bar car. Photo by Gene Poon.

For the Del Mar racing season this year, there is a free shuttle bus from the Solana Beach CA station to the racetrack from July 23 through Sep 10 (the track is closed on Tuesdays). Double-decker buses meet inbound trains 572/1574/774/776/578/792 and return trains 577/779/1593/593/583/1585/585. (Trains with four-digit numbers are extras run July 26-27.)

Fare adjustments were made on many West Coast routes July 22, with some increases and some decreases. Custom Class charge rose $1.00 on the SAN DIEGAN line. The Oakland-Reno fare rose 15%, making it higher than the corresponding bus fare.

Amtrak West offers its Friendship Fares between Sep 8 and Nov 21. Under this promo, the first person pays regular fare, the second gets 50% off, and the third travels free. The offer is good with the senior discount. For two people traveling, the first pays full fare and the second gets half off. The offer is good also in Custom Class and first class upon payment of all applicable accommodation charges. Everyone on one offer must travel on the same itinerary. The fares will be good on most West Coast trains: the COAST STARLIGHT, SAN DIEGANS, SAN JOAQUINS, CAPITOLS and Pacific Northwest trains. They are not good on the CAL ZEPHYR, SUNSET, SW CHIEF or EMPIRE BUILDER.

Mayor Willie Brown of San Francsico is in hot water mainly over a number of transportation issues: his opposition to a downtown terminal for Caltrain; his support of the Transbay Terminal for commercial, not transit uses; his lack of progress in improving Muni performance; his controversial handling of the Central Freeway rebuilding issue; and most recently his involvement with "Critical Mass", an apparently unorganized group of bicyclists who gather in S.F. on Fridays to ride through the city, blocking auto traffic, with the tacit approval of police. On July 25 their ride got out of hand, resulting in a near-riot, with cyclists arrested. The incident unleashed a storm of letters to editors on both sides and further hurt Brown's image as weak on transportation issues.

A July 26 report said that AC Transit had dropped a suit against San Francisco that challenged the city's plans to move the Transbay Terminal. Brown had pressured AC Transit to end the suit, which claimed SF had not done an environmental report.

Meanwhile, SF Supervisor Leland Yee said that the Caltrain extension to downtown SF should be kept as a viable alternative. Brown had vetoed the Board of Supervisors' recent vote to keep the plan alive by doing an environmental study. Most observers see the extension plan as dead now due to Brown's lack of support.

The Coast Starlight is now powered by the old F40 engines rather than the new Genesis locos. Amtrak Intercity has been clamoring for all the Genesis engines they could get, and Amtrak West released the ones assigned to the STARLIGHT. It will cost less for Amtrak West to run the train now. Yes, it is with an accounting ploy, but the F40s are all paid off, while interest charges must be paid on the Genesis engines. Thus, costs accrued by the STARLIGHT are reduced. The last Genesis on the STARLIGHT was on train 11 of July 22—engine 805, paired with F40 #364.

Dan Hauser, general manager of the North Coast Railroad Authority, which operates the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, has said that it will be financially impossible to restore the railroad's trackage to FRA standards in time to restore the scheduled passenger excursions during 1997. Roughly 15,000 ties need to be replaced between Healdsburg and Willits. Hauser blamed the SP for allowing the roadbed to deteriorate before the same of the line to the NWP.

In reaction, the REDWOOD ADVENTURER train operator is studying a restructuring of their excursion schedule. Since Hauser said the Asti-Hopland portion of the line is not affected and could meet FRA standards, the excursions might be changed to a twice- or thrice-a-day Asti-Hopland trip, which would include the Russian River canyon north of Cloverdale, inaccessible except by rail. Ridge Hill, the other major inaccessible part of the NWP, is still barred from use by the FRA.

In related NWP news, Hauser said that out of five locos involved in a wreck in Willits (see last issue), three will be replaced by insurance. This is the first official indication from the railroad that damage exceeds the $100,000 figure that they first released.

A fare misprint appeared in an Amtrak West ad in the Chico (CA) *Enterprise Record* about July 24. When ads were sent to newspapers, the Chico paper somehow got the fares from San Jose. The following wrong fares were published (all from Chico): to San Jose $27 (should be $31); Los Angeles $34 (should be $52); Vallejo/Marine World $42 (should be $40); Fresno $16 (should be $31) and Berkeley/San Francisco $6 (should be $25 [!]). Amtrak said it would have to honor the fares until July 26, when a corrected ad would appear.

Downtown Los Angeles will be converted into a grand prix raceway for a vintage grand prix Aug 29-Sep 2. Between Aug 25 and Sep 4, it will be more difficult to access LAUS. Amtrak warned that one should add 1-1½ hours travel time to and from the station.—Gene Poon.

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Whistle Stop Tour train will be in the West during August, with the following schedule: Aug 7 Seattle, Aug 8 Mt. Vernon & Everett, Aug 9 Seattle, Aug 10 Vancouver WA & Portland, Aug 11 Eugene, Aug 13 Sacramento station, Aug 14 Sacramento Railway Museum, Aug 15 Bakersfield, Fresno and Merced, Aug 16 San Jose, Aug 17 Oakland, Aug 18 San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara, Aug 20 Los Angeles, Aug 21 Santa Ana and Oceanside, Aug 22 San Diego. The exhibit train tour is sponsored by the Great American Station Foundation, an organization promoting the improvement of train stations in the US. Amtrak is a member of the foundation. The trains' tour across the US celebrates the renaissance of railroad stations in this country.

The grand opening of the Carpinteria CA station on July 12 features the appearance of Disney's Hercules and Meg and a jazz band. The new station is served by two SAN DIEGANS daily in each direction. Also scheduled to open along that route this year are Surf and Guadalupe.

A schedule change: SAN DIEGAN train 781 on July 21 began leaving San Diego at 3pm, 5mins earlier, with the change also affecting Solana Beach, Oceanside and San Clemente. The change was made to improve on-time reliability.

The Amtrak Board of Directors met in Oakland July 24-25, and while there visited the Jack London Square station. The meeting was part of a series of nationwide traveling meetings. Last year the Board met in Portland OR.

Amtrak West reported that for the month of June, ridership on all its trains was up. The CAPITOLS were up 6.8%, COAST STARLIGHT up 18.5% (for its highest ridership since June 1991), Pacific Northwest trains up 23.3%, SAN DIEGANS up 3.5% and SAN JOAQUINS up 26%. The June ridership was a record for the CAPITOLS, and the SAN JOAQUINS and Pacific Northwest trains had record patronage increases in Apr, May & June. The SAN DIEGANS had record Custom Class patronage in May & June.

To consolidate services and cut costs, the San Francisco Amtrak sales office and the Oakland claims office moved to Amtrak West headquarters at 530 Water St in Oakland.

Oregon and Washington DOTs have contracted with Amtrak to run trains between Vancouver WA and Portland for a 21-day period starting Sep 16 during closure of the northbound part of I-5 bridge for repairs. Amtrak will use Amfleet cars for the shuttle service. The estimated trip time between the two adjacent cities is 25mins. This is not an official Amtrak service. No fares will be collected, and shuttle bus service will be run to the normal park-&-ride lots. The service will operate on weekdays only.—Ed Von Nordeck.

COAST STARLIGHT has added a fifth coach, making the summer consist a baggage car, transition dorm-sleeper, 3 Superliner II sleepers, Hi-level lounge (Pacific Parlor car), Superliner II diner & lounge and 5 Superliner II coaches. The coach behind the lounge is normally the kiddie car.

Welcoming the *Twilight Shoreliner*

By Alan Feinstein as told to Gene Poon
Photos by John P. Stith

Amtrak's Boston-Newport News **Twilight Shoreliner**, which replaced the **Night Owl** on July 10, represents a significant upgrading of service and amenities in the Northeast Corridor. While I couldn't arrange time for a trip on the inaugural, I was able to juggle my plans to schedule an overnight ride while the train was still new.

I had arrived in Boston on the Lake Shore Limited on Saturday, July 12. At 7:00 PM, two F40's back an eight-car train into South Station for a scheduled 8:00 PM departure. Refrigeration problems in the coach-class cafe car threaten to delay our trip, but mechanical forces quickly remedy the situation, and sleeping car passengers are preboarded at 7:30 PM, followed by Custom Class and coach riders. The **Twilight Shoreliner**, Train 67, eases out on its third day of operation, on time.

T'he **Shoreliner** is divided by a locked door into a coach section, three coaches and a cafe car; and a first-class section, custom class car, dinette-lounge and Viewliner sleeper "Wayside View." The Viewliner and dinette-lounge wear a blue window band emblazoned with stars and crescent moons and trimmed with **Twilight Shoreliner** decals. Resembling a one-way mirror, the window band blocks the view from the outside into the cars; but passengers can easily see out.

On board, food service opens just after the Route 128 stop, and stays open until Williamsburg, VA, the next morning. Since I finished my tuna sandwich on the **Lake Shore** hours ago, I quickly stow my bags in Room 5 of "Wayside View", and head for the dinette-lounge car.

Dinner, breakfast and beverages, including liquor, are complimentary to Viewliner passengers, who have exclusive access to the dinette portion of the car. Tonight's beef Burgundy, rotisserie chicken and chicken Caesar salad are entrees which are a cut above anything I have seen on Northeast Corridor trains, actually approaching the standards for the long-distance trains with a full diner. Service is likewise superb and attentive--drink refills appear before our glasses are even half-empty!

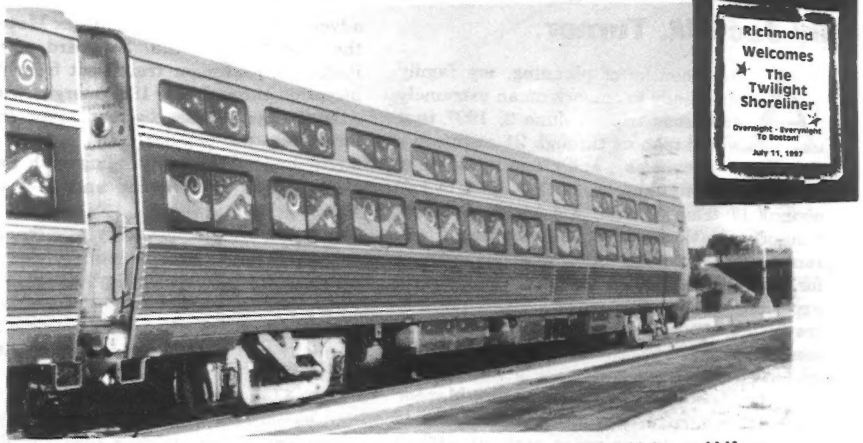
The other end of the dinette-lounge is dubbed the Twilight Lounge. Both Viewliner and Custom Class passengers have access. Snacks and sandwiches are available for purchase; non-alcoholic beverages and a nut-snack mix are complimentary. The lounge is a perfect place to relax and socialize before retiring. We down more than a few Shoreliner Special cocktails this evening.

I am joined by Andy Gregory, longtime RTN reader and newsletter editor for the Virginia Association of Rail Patrons. Andy tells of festivities for the inaugural run at Richmond: speeches, souvenir neckties and the cutting of a huge cake preceded the obligatory ribbon-cutting. The celebration was marred only by a delayed departure due to CSX freight interference.

Back in Room 5, I study the leatherette-bound menu folder with the train name embossed on the cover. The overnight toiletries kit is generic Amtrak (the **Lake Shore** actually has special ones with the train's emblem). A "Welcome Aboard" card from NortheastDirect manager Dave Nogar and a **Twilight Shoreliner** guest directory provide information to first-time riders, which includes most of tonight's passengers. Bedtime chocolates in the shape of stars and crescent moons are a nice touch.

An average speed of 42 mph on the Boston-Washington run, while typical for a long-distance Amtrak train, is 18 mph slower than other NortheastDirect trains on the same route. The **Shoreliner** does attain track speeds equal to its daytime mates, with ample dwell times for handling mail and express. At speed, "Wayside View" rides smoother and far quieter than the aged Heritage sleepers which were withdrawn from revenue service in June. I doze through New York, where the Metropolitan Lounge stays open for both coach and first class patrons; and past my home station, Princeton Junction, where the **Shoreliner** whips through without stopping. Awakening at Philadelphia, I note that we are well ahead of schedule, and quickly drift off again while carts loaded with mail and express rumble past on the platform.

Inaugural cake at Richmond, in blue and white with yellow stars.



Viewliner sleeper 62047 (behind sleeper 62048) on inaugural train 76 at Richmond VA on July 11. Sleeper windows of these dedicated cars are covered with blue bands emblazoned with nocturnal celestial symbols.

The inaugural run of the north-bound train from Richmond on July 11 began at 5:30pm at the Staples Mill Road Station. Festivities included a ribbon-breaking ceremony (see cover photo). There was an inaugural cake for attendees, and among the speakers were David Nogar, general manager of Amtrak's Northeast-Direct product line, and Viola Baskerville, vice-mayor of Richmond.

The train leaves Richmond at 6:15pm. There is a Metro stop one block from the station. Describing the new service, which replaces the NIGHT OWL and uses the former train's numbers of 66&67, Amtrak NE Corridor President George D. Warrington said: "[the train] will feature state-of-the-art sleeping cars and a schedule that provides a host of recreational, business and family travel opportunities from Boston to Virginia. The TWILIGHT SHORELINER will open up the Williamsburg tourism market to train travel for overnight trips from New England and day trips from Washington; reinvent overnight business travel in the Northeast; provide Richmond with a morning train from Washington; and offer a train home for late-night visitors to New York.

"...it will introduce a whole new level of customer service in the NE Corridor, with on-board, destination-oriented entertainment; hospitality kits available to sleeper and Custom Class passengers; and top-notch dinner and breakfast options for Viewliner passengers. From the new lounge car to the chocolates on the pillows, the TWILIGHT SHORELINER will cater to a passenger's every need."

Our sleeping car attendant, Rich, is on duty all night, but has been able to catch a few winks between New York and Philadelphia. A furloughed conductor, he never returned to train service and now holds down a three-on, three-off assignment from his Boston home base, with but a few hours' rest in Newport News. He says that unreserved coach is busy all night, with shorthaul passengers boarding and detraining constantly. Custom Class and Viewliner passengers are on for longer, overnight rides. He and Amtrak hope that the new earlier schedule doesn't reduce overnight Boston-Washington business travel too much, while building patronage to Virginia points. Tonight, the Viewliner is over half-full but the passenger load is greater than that in a Heritage sleeper at capacity.

I'm getting off at Washington, and shuffle sleepily to the dinette for breakfast as the train rumbles through the B&P tunnels in

(continued on page 20)

Traveling North America By Rail: Part I Amtraking To Toronto

By Jack M. Turner

After months of planning, my family was ready to embark on an extremely ambitious trip on June 2, 1997 that would take us through 21 states, five Canadian provinces and one Canadian territory. We would cover 11,745 miles by rail aboard 17 trains, cruise the Inside Passage, run off countless miles on tour buses and rental cars, and throw in one airplane flight for good measure. The object would be to experience some of North America's greatest travel experiences without missing a connection while maintaining both our sanity and our desire to press on.

Amtrak's northbound **Silver Meteor** pulled to a stop at the Jacksonville, Florida Amtrak station two minutes early at 4:03pm on this, the first Monday in June 1997. Accompanied by my wife Christine and eight-year-old son John, I confidently stepped aboard new Viewliner sleeper *Gulf View* and took up residence in Deluxe Bedroom "A".

Activity outside our window soon picked up as the eastbound **Sunset Limited** eased in on the next track, running five hours late due to signal trouble and a crew that had gone on the law near Live Oak. To minimize the delay to our train, the **Sunset** came in engine first so that connecting passengers and bags could be transferred quickly.

The **Silver Meteor** nudged forward just 25 minutes late at 4:55pm and our rail adventure had begun. The **Silver Meteor** was the flagship of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad's passenger train fleet from its 1939 inception through the 1967 merger with rival Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. For the next four years the popular New York to Florida streamliner shared top billing with Seaboard Coast Line's **Champion** and the seasonal **Florida Special.**

For the past 26 years the **Meteor** has maintained that distinction under Amtrak operation while operating mostly over the route once traversed by the ACL trains. Since November 1996 the **Silver Meteor** has normally consisted of ten cars as Amtrak has standardized eastern consists to allow interchanging of trainsets. One recent change that would be apparent on this train was the placement of the sleeping cars ahead of the dining car instead of at the rear of the train.

As we departed Jacksonville the crew chief stopped by to introduce himself and offer reservations for dinner. As usual, we selected the early seating which was just about to begin. Most seasoned travelers consider dining on the rails a treat as the dining car has the best view of any known restaurant. The scenery during this meal would be dominated by pine forests, small towns and muddy rivers connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the interior of Georgia. Tomorrow's breakfast view would include passing metropolitan scenes punctuated by wide river crossings in the Northeast. Ahead would lie many more dining car views of mountains, lakes and other fascinating sights during the coming month.

This is the first in a series of articles about RTN contributor Jack Turner's 11,000-mile rail trip during June '97.

The northbound SILVER METEOR (train 98) at left and the eastbound SUNSET LIMITED (train 2) share a platform at Jacksonville FL on June 2, 1997. Photos by the author.

Dating back to its Seaboard heyday, the **Silver Meteor** has usually featured excellent meal s and this dinner would be no exception. Herb's baked chicken accompanied by tossed salad, baked potato, and a dollop of corn soufflé, topped off with sinfully delicious Key lime pie started the trip off well.

We were 80 minutes late at Savannah thanks to trackwork that necessitated numerous slow orders, one of the necessary inconveniences of running a safe railroad. The southbound **Silver Palm** was met just north of the Charleston, South Carolina station at 10pm as we prepared to turn in for the night.

After several months of regular service, the Viewliner sleepers seem to have found their niche as internal systems such as the sound, video, and lighting all worked perfectly. Most importantly, the *Gulf View* and sister *Summit View*, one car to the rear, were pleasantly cooled by well-functioning air conditioning systems. The existence of showers in the deluxe bedrooms and at one end of the car plus a snack and soda stand amply stocked with complimentary cookies and soft drinks are welcomed improvements over the Heritage fleet sleepers that served so well for 50 years.

Like their Superliner cousins, the Viewliners do suffer from a variety of rattles emanating from bedroom doors and partitions between rooms. These, however, were readily cured by stuffing a wash cloth between the offending doors and the adjacent wall. As a result, this was one of the most restful first nights aboard a train in my recent memory. Only the brief cessation of the soothing white noise from the air conditioning awoke me in Richmond as the head end power was turned off while a CSX office car was removed from the rear of our train.

Breakfast time found the **Silver Meteor** whisking along the Northeast Corridor north of Baltimore and setting its sights on Philadelphia.. The early morning arrival in the Northeast is one of the **Meteor's** top drawing cards as it allows visitors to enjoy full days of sightseeing at such historic sights as Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, and Valley Forge in the Philadelphia area; the trendy Inner Harbor area in Baltimore; or the many sights and sounds of Manhattan.

The latter would be our plan today as we would take a Circle Line boat tour around Manhattan Island.

Arrival in New York's Penn Station at 11:18am was just over an hour and a half late but still in plenty of time to execute our sightseeing plans. After storing luggage in the convenient Metropolitan Lounge, we set out for a fairly short walk to the Port Authority bus terminal where Gray Line sells tickets for Circle Line boat tours. Amazingly, the PATH terminal was clean and well patrolled by police

The northbound MAPLE LEAF arrives in Albany-Rensselaer on June 4, 1997 behind engine #705. An F-40 soon will replace this Genesis unit for the all-day run to Toronto.

and was far from the intimidating place one might have expected.

A Gray Line shuttle bus deposited us at the dock for the three-hour Circle Line tour and shortly we were enjoying magnificent views of the impressive New York skyline, many bridges, the Statue of Liberty, and Yankee Stadium. The old Erie Lackawanna and Central of New Jersey Terminals in Hoboken and Jersey City, New Jersey respectively were also prominently visible along with numerous elevated subway bridges, Amtrak's Hell Gate Bridge, and the Spuyten Duyvil bridge used by the **Lake Shore Limited** and other Empire Service trains. As we sailed between the open swing-span of the latter bridge, the thought occurred that we would ride across this very bridge in approximately three hours.

After collecting our luggage at the Metropolitan Lounge, it was time to board the westbound **Lake Shore Limited** for a short run up to Albany where we would spend the night. The **Lake Shore** was chosen for its evening departure time which allowed ample sightseeing time but also because it offered checked baggage service, a. must for us on this long luggage-laden trip. As short haul sleeping space is reasonably priced on this run, we had booked first class space mainly to avoid the commuter rush boarding at New York and to permit use of the Metropolitan Lounge for safe luggage storage. The choice was a wise one and apparently not that uncommon.

The waiting **Lake Shore Limited** was comprised of the same equipment (with the exception of the locomotive) we had on the **Silver Meteor.** Once more we were assigned to the *Gulf View* though in a different room. While passing through Croton-Harmon we made our way to the dining car for an excellent meal of roast beef, mashed potatoes, and green beans. The red and purple hues of the setting sun above the scenic Hudson River upheld the "meal with a view" reputation of the dining car.

As the Albany-Rensselaer station came into view at 9:20pm, our jovial conductor announced that the train would be making some switching moves to connect with the train's Boston section. "We'll move forward then backwards and maybe forward again. This is normal," he advised., "But if we start to move sideways, well then, we've got a problem." Little did I know that he would be just one of many railroad employees who would keep their passengers well informed throughout the trip, a change from past experiences.

Following a night at the Omni Hotel in Albany, it was time to resume our northward march on Wednesday, June 4. The Omni had been chosen for its courtesy van pickup and dropoff service at the Amtrak station. Two vans full of hotel guests were delivered to Amtrak on this Wednesday morning, testament to the popularity of New York's rail service as well as the Omni's location adjacent to the state capitol building.

The **Maple Leaf** is perhaps one of Amtrak's least documented rail journeys yet one that compares favorably with most of the routes in the eastern part of the nation. For passengers boarding in New York City, this train offers a stunning backlit morning view of the beautiful Hudson River that contrasts with the evening vista we enjoyed the previous night. The route turns in a more westerly direction at Albany and traces the Mohawk River for many miles. During this part of the trip riders can watch pleasure boats traversing the river and catch a glimpse of these vessels being raised or lowered in the locks next to the numerous dams along the watercourse. History buffs, meanwhile, will enjoy many communities along the way that played a role in early American history. One such community, Herkimer, was named for a German soldier who led the battle against the British, the Tories, and the Indians in 1777. On our trip the conductor offers an enjoyable commentary about such points of interest.

Meanwhile, freight activity is heavy on this Conrail artery and we seem to pass an eastbound freight every few minutes. The perils of railroading are evident just west of Herkimer as we ease past the remains of a major freight derailment that wiped out perhaps 50 freight cars a day or two earlier. The errant cars, many minus wheels, have been pushed off the right-of-way by bulldozers and other heavy equipment, and Conrail crews are putting the finishing touches on relaying ties and re-ballasting the track.

Minor league AAA baseball stadiums stand beside the railway at Syracuse and Rochester and evoke conversation about the state of America's pastime. A large mall on the left at Syracuse is served by the Susquehanna rail diesel car idling at an adjacent commuter station. Rochester, meanwhile, takes the prize for the most modern looking train station on this route.

The former New York Central main line is left at Buffalo shortly after we pass the sad remains of old Buffalo Central Station, now a decaying hulk. Moments later the **Maple Leaf** pauses at the downtown Exchange Street Station located beside another nice AAA baseball stadium, this one home to the Buffalo Bisons. Five minutes later the **Maple Leaf** follows the sparkling Niagara River which it parallels to Niagara Falls.

Normally the **Maple Leaf** proceeds directly across the border to the Canadian Customs checkpoint. However today U.S. Customs seems to be on the prowl and we are stopped for a "brief" Customs inspection at 4:05pm. For the next 50 minutes Customs agents walk back and forth through the Amfleet coaches wearing stern looks on their faces. One chap makes the mistake of standing up to stretch and is tersely told to stay seated. I silently wonder whether we are in the United States or in Eastern Bloc nation but don't dare share this thought with anyone. Finally we are allowed to continue onward.

The Niagara River Canyon, below and to the right, is one of the scenic highlights of this journey; however, most passengers like myself seem intent on trying to see Niagara Falls off to the left. Only the misty spray above the falls can be barely seen and luckily I am able to move across the aisle to grab a look at the canyon. A minute later we stop at the Niagara Falls, Ontario VIA Rail station where Canadian Customs officers board to inspect the train. This process is far more efficient and friendly than the U.S. Customs stop and we are on our way at 5:40pm.

A half hour north of Niagara Falls the **Maple Leaf** crosses the Welland Canal which connects Lakes Ontario and Erie. This important waterway is used by oceangoing ships which must travel through a series of locks that raise or lower them depending upon their direction. For the first time in my numerous rail trips, we are stopped to allow a ship to pass, a 10-minute delay that is so unusual that it is not bothersome.

Following a quick stop at St. Catherines, the **Maple Leaf** passes through a rich agricultural area filled with vineyards and peach orchards. Shortly, nice views of Lake Ontario appear on the right side and near Grimsby one can barely see the skyline of Toronto and the trademark CN Tower in the distance. The train is, however, an hour away as the rail line travels in a looping direction along the lake's western shore, whereas the view of the skyline is in a direct path across the lake.

Hamilton Jct. and Bayview mark the junctions with Canadian National tracks to Windsor, Ontario, served by many daily VIA Rail Canada trains from Toronto. Opposing rail traffic on this day is fairly heavy as GO Transit commuter trains make their outbound evening runs. The suburbs of Toronto grow rapidly and we reach Toronto's magnificent Union Station 30 minutes late at 7:45pm.

Our lodging for the night is at the magnificent Royal York Hotel, located directly across the street from Union Station. The Royal York is connected to the railway station by a subterranean shopping arcade, and station redcaps will transport luggage to the hotel. Conversely, in the morning hotel bellmen take luggage to the station.

The Royal York was built by the Canadian Pacific Railway and opened for business in 1929. At the time, the 28-story hotel was the tallest building in the British Empire. Eventually, the CPR built hotels at selected points along its transcontinental route that were designed to house and pamper its upscale passengers.

Throughout the years, the hotel has hosted a who's who of dignitaries from the worlds of politics and entertainment, many of whom traveled to Toronto by train. Today this four-star hotel boasts 1,348 guest rooms and many amenities including a large swimming pool. Reservations at the Royal York may be made by calling Canadian Pacific Hotels at (800) 441-1414.

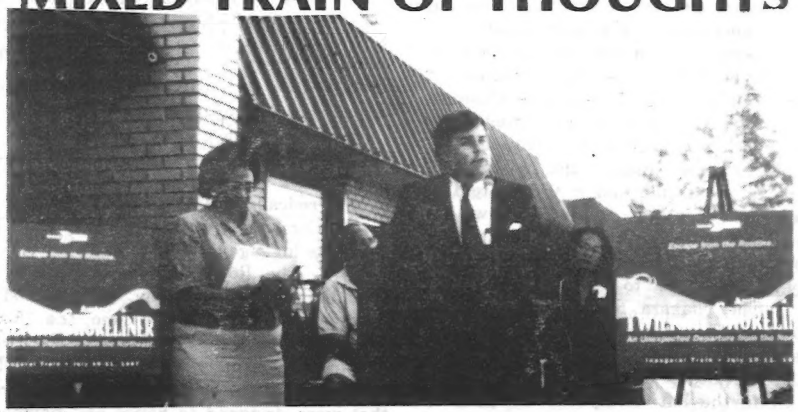
A short walk from the hotel takes us to CN Tower, noted as the tallest freestanding building in the world at 1,815 feet. A swift elevator ride carries us to the observation deck, 1,150 feet in the air, where the view of metropolitan Toronto, Lake Ontario, and environs is incredible. Almost directly below are SkyDome, home of the Toronto BlueJays, Toronto Union Station, and the Royal York Hotel. A popular restaurant at this level offers diners a spectacular view while one level below there is a glass floor that allows the daring to look more than 1,100 feet straight down.

Downtown Toronto is home to a number of other interesting attractions including the Royal Ontario Museum, the Hockey Hall of Fame, Ontario Place, Eaton Centre, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Ontario Parliament buildings. Clearly, there are enough activities to occupy any visitor. Passenger train fans also will find Toronto a mecca as Amtrak trains operate daily to New York and Chicago while VIA Rail Canada. offers daily service to Niagara Falls, Windsor, Sarnia, Ottawa, and Montreal, as well as the triweekly **Canadian** to Vancouver. Ontario Northland's **Northlander** links Toronto with Cochrane, while GO Transit commuter routes fan out in many directions and a local subway system connects many downtown points.

The author thanks Marc Magliari of Amtrak, Nancie Hall of the Royal York Hotel and John Hamilton of Tourism Toronto for their kind assistance.

Next issue: the CANADIAN.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS



Speaking at the inaugural ceremony for the first northbound TWILIGHT SHORELINER train at Richmond VA on July 11, David Nogar, general manager of Amtrak's NortheastDirect product line, was photographed by John P. Stith. At left is Viola Baskerville, vice-mayor of Richmond.

Does Amtrak run its express cars "quietly", keeping their existence a secret because the practice might not be legal under its contracts with the freight railroads? The Wall Street Journal seems to think so, judging from its front-page article of July 30. The critical question here is whether what Amtrak carries on some of its long-distance trains is express or actually freight, and whether Amtrak is trying to hide its activities from the host railroads.

The article's headline reads "Amtrak Quietly Hauls Cargo on Its Trains, To the Horror of Rivals". Responding to the article, Bob Rynerson of Denver wrote the following letter to the WSJ and the article's author, Daniel Machalaba:

"If it was not part of a consistent pattern of poor reporting, the story...would be funny. Daniel Machalaba attempts to suggest that somehow Amtrak has been secretly moving tons of cargo, and has hidden its baggage car-size efforts. In fact, Amtrak officials have made numerous public presentations on this. I attended one such event in Denver, at the Oxford Hotel, on Sat, April 5. The sponsoring group had the meeting listed in national rail publications, and the group's president specifically commented on the fact that numerous media invitations were sent out. Only the Denver Post covered the story, a job which they did accurately and with interesting sidebars. You could have looked it up.

"As for Portland activity taking place 'out of public view' under bridges, [The article said 'Near Portland's passenger station, an Amtrak crew waits in the shadows of a big steel shed hidden from public view by buildings and a highway overpass.] that is where it has taken place ever since the bridge was built—generations before Amtrak started up. I spent many hours working on or waiting for express shipments there for our family wholesaling business in the 1950s and 1960s—before Amtrak. This activity is such a traditional part of railroad passenger service that you can drop by the rail museum at the Pueblo Union Depot and see a high-speed boxcar for passenger train package shipments on display there.

"You do not have space enough for me to shoot down every trumped-up absurdity in this article; the only thing that you have exposed in the article is a desire that folks out here in Flyover Country be stripped of their remaining rail service by re-writing the rules to ban a traditional function of rail passenger service which is finally being revitalized. You should stick with the rest of the conspiracy theorists and write about black helicopters. Quit worrying about green high-speed boxcars."

The article did present a lot of interesting information, and the reader is referred to it. And it gave a good quote from Amtrak President Tom Downs: "We're not after a single carload of freight from the railroads. But when I talk to our friends in the railroad business, sometimes I feel like a wet dog that has come into a wedding."

The article reported that Union Pacific is particularly upset and is threatening to terminate Amtrak's rights to use UP rails.

The Genesis engines recently taken off the COAST STARLIGHT (see p. 8) are needed on the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, which has had a chronic lateness problem recently. The intent was to use two Genesis units to replace three F40s. But, especially in the mountains, the plan didn't work, so the standard power consist for the CZ is now three units—a mix of Genesis and F40. (The first Genesis engines on the STARLIGHT went south in 1995, on the day after the MT. BAKER INTERNATIONAL inaugural. I attended the inaugural and rode home on that exact STARLIGHT trip. We left Seattle two hours late because the Seattle shops could not reboot the computer on one unit, but we made up all the time into Martinez.—Gene Poon.)

New Genesis P42 units have been delivered to Amtrak's NE Corridor Business Unit, painted in the new paint scheme that matches the NortheastDirect cars. The initial assignment has been to the Keystone Service, Philadelphia-Harrisburg, which has been F40 territory until now.

There had been a rumor in the rail-fan community in PA about a small switch engine at the Conrail shops in Altoona, with Amtrak paint. Some rumors said it was an Amtrak engine which Conrail was painting. Actually, it is the Conrail shop engine #99. Conrail is painting the new Genesis engines for GE, and when #99 needed paint, they sprayed it with platinum mist (Amtrak silver) and used pieces of Genesis striping, installing it upside down (blue stripe on top). The unit is a GE 44-ton switch engine and has nothing to do with passenger trains.

Amtrak released the following message to the media July 30 regarding the Amtrak Reauthorization Bill: "House and Senate budget conferees completed work on the tax package today. Conferees included a provision championed by Sen. Roth (R-DE) to provide $2.3 billion over the next two years in capital funds for Amtrak. However, crticial negotiations to attach Amtrak authorization to the budget package failed as talks between conferees and the White House broke down. Without passage of an authorization bill, Amtrak is not allowed to receive any portion of the $2.3 billion. Committees in both the House and Senate have passed authorizing legislation; the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee acted today. The legislation is nearly identical to last year's bill. Prospects this year, however, on the House and Senate floor remain tenuous. Although organized labor helped draft last year's bill, it has done an about face and is now opposing the legislation this year.

"'Amtrak applauds the conferees' diligence and Sen. Roth's leadership in including dedicated capital support in the budget bill. However, the lack of an authorization means Amtrak's top legislative priority remains elusive,' said Thomas M. Downs... Congress may ultimately pass an authorization bill that Pres. Clinton signs into law. Unfortunately, Amtrak does not have the luxury of time, nor do the millions who ride Amtrak and thousands who work for the railroad. Congress and the Clinton Administration have mandated Amtrak to end reliance on federal operating support by 2002. The $2.3 billion in capital funding is essential if Amtrak is to meet that mandate. The funding would enable Amtrak to modernize its infrastructure. This would make it less expensive to operate the national passenger rail system. In conjunction with reforms contained in the House and Senate authorization bills and adequate appropriations for operating support, a decidated source of capital funding is what Amtrak needs to reach operating self-sufficiency."

Amtrak wrote another release July 31 about the labor opposition to the reauthorization and reform bill, saying that all Amtrak employees need to better understand the issues involved: "...Right now the law will require that before Amtrak can have access to the $2.3 billion capital investment funds, Amtrak must be reauthorized, and that any reauthorization bill must include reforms to the laws covering Amtrak" labor practices. Versions of the bill which include such reforms are being inaccurately termed 'anti-labor'.

"The fact is that the reform bill that is before Congress would require Amtrak labor and management to negotiate issues of contracting out and various protections under present C-2 rules. Currently, these issues are determined by federal law, rather than the collective bargaining process. There is confusion in many circles about what this means. Some think Amtrak would be able to immediately contract out all work and immediately furlough employees were this bill to pass. That is not true.

"The truth is that Amtrak labor and management would have to negotiate what contracting out and C-2 coverage would be before Amtrak could implement any change—negotiations just like those currently applying to salaries, benefits and work rules. Labor representatives would always have the option to reject management's proposals. If parties were not able to agree through normal negotiations, the bill would provide for procedures to

resolve an impasse similar to those currently in place under the Railway Labor Act...

"It is unclear how rail labor can now say the proposal it drafted [in 1995] is 'anti-labor', thereby threatening the very $2.3 billion that is critical to the preservation of Amtrak. Amtrak must have a reform bill signed into law, or all of our jobs at Amtrak will be sacrificed."

President Clinton could end up destroying Amtrak if he doesn't act to facilitate the Amtrak reform and reauthorization bill. Said NARP: "The key question is whether the Congress and President Clinton can agree this year on an Amtrak reauthorization bill. Only if such a bill is enacted can Amtrak receive the big $2.3 billion capital fund which is part of the final budget reconciliation package. The budget package language replaces Sen. Roth's original half-cent language, but provides the same amount of money. Knowing how hard it is to pass a separate Amtrak reauthorization, Sen. Roth tried hard [the last week of July] to make a deal with the White House to put an Amtrak reauthorization into the budget package too. Roth got fellow Republicans to agree to compromise on liability reform, on the Amtrak Board of Directors provisions, and on the Senate shutdown commission. He also offered something President Clinton wants very much, relating to Caribbean trade issues, if Clinton would agree to the Amtrak reauthorization. Clinton refused to accept the labor reforms that Republicans see as vital, even though labor itself supported these reforms two years ago and even helped to write them".

Instead of $2.3 billion from gas tax, Congress has worked out that Amtrak would get $2.3 billion in the form of a tax refund tied to certain pre-1971 taxes paid by the private railroads for passenger service that Amtrak took over—a refund technically known as a "net operating loss carryback". NARP explained, "Most businesses can reduce their tax liability by writing off their losses, but until now Amtrak has never enjoyed a similar benefit because it has not paid taxes. The money would be used only for capital, and would be subject to passage of a reform reauthorization bill that addresses labor and liability issues."

Although the $2.3 billion was originally supposed to cover three years, Amtrak would get the amount in a two-year period, with half of it payable in Jan 1998 and half in Jan 1999. NARP said, "Enactment of a reauthorization any time this year would let Amtrak get its pot of gold on time. However, time is shsort and there is such bad blood over this issue that the outlook is mixed at best. Republicans might not return to the new compromises they offered this week; indeed the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee [on July 31] passed an Amtrak authorization, HR 2247, without those compromises. Moreover the AFL/CIO [on July 30] wrote to President Clinton attacking Amtrak President Tom Downs because he supports the labor reforms essential to save Amtrak—again, the same labor reforms the unions themselves endorsed two years ago".

NARP asked its members to contact President Clinton quickly, asking him to agree to the labor reforms in the Amtrak reauthorization bill: "[President Clinton] needs to know that you know there is a choice. President Clinton can act responsibly to save intercity passenger rail and 23,000 jobs at Amtrak, or he can keep taking dictation from rail labor on every detail and watch Amtrak collapse on his watch, probably within five months. You can call the White House comment line at 202-456-1111 or send a fax to 202-456-2461".

In other Congressional action, the full Senate in late July approved its transportation appropriations bill, S 1048. It gives highways a 21% increase in funding, and airports a 16% rise. After Labor Day, a House-Senate conference should occur. NARP noted, "The key problem for Amtrak is getting the full $142 million for excess mandatory payments. The House bill is $61 million short there; the Senate bill has the full amount only because it was forced in committee onto the unsympathetic Senate subcommittee chairman Richard Shelby of AL. Conferees must keep that money, which the Senate approved, in the final bill".

Half-cent bill in the House will not be passed now, because of the change in terms (described above) by which Amtrak would receive its needed $2.3 billion in capital. However, there were 81 House sponsors of the bill, and NARP thanked its members for their work on getting them, which of course helped get the $2.3 billion into the final budget package.

●●●

Amtrak will run the TEXAS EAGLE indefinitely beyond Sep 30, it announced late in July. Sep 30 was the limit covered by the loan agreement from the state of Texas. Amtrak has opened reservations for the period Oct 1-25, when the fall timetable appears, and will open them further when fall schedule plans are finalized.

Northbound twilight shoreliner has been losing an hour Richmond-DC due to damage from the July 8 CSX derailment, and another hour farther north due to NECIP work. Train 67 has been good in timekeeping.

RAIL FANTRIPS

EXCURSION OF THE MONTH

Oct 1-5: Atlantic Canada Autumn Adventure. 5-day tour of Quebec, New Brunswick & Nova Scotia. Easterly class on VIA's *Ocean*. 2 nites in sleeping cars. Bonus: riding 2 other trains. Complimen-tary breakfast in the "obs." Lunch & dinner in the diner. Optional sightseeing tours: City of Montreal, City of Halifax, Shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupre & Montmorency Falls. Hotels in Halifax & Quebec City. Air: St. Louis-Montreal. Limit 24 psgrs. $990 & up. Rail Adventure Excursions, 4351 Holly Hills Blvd, St. Louis MO 63116. 314-752-3148.

Sep 28: Peter Witt Down Under. 1926 P.W. trolley car thru trolley subway & over subway-diversion rte & rtes 10,11,13,15,36 in Philadelphia. Also PCC car. Trip is 5hrs. Only few standees. $25. Bucking-ham Valley Trolley Assn, Geo. Metz, 130 Spring-ton Lake Rd, Media PA 19063. 610-565-0528.

Oct 3-5: 2nd annual railfan weekend on Grand Can-yon Rwy, featuring 4960, "The Teacher." Night photos, all-day special to Grand Canyon, loco shop tour, etc. Coach pkg $133, Chief pkg $223. Or separately-priced events. Grand Canyon Rwy, 125 N San Francisco #210, Flagstaff AZ 86001.

Oct 18: Northern VT RR (ex-CP Lyndonville Sub) excursion: Wells River VT to Quebec border, orig-inate & terminate at St. Johnsbury. Iron Road fleet equipt incl ex-VIA DayNiters, slpr, lounge, & Iron Road car 100. $58 incl lunch. Mass. Bay RR En-thusiasts, Box 467, Lincoln MA 01773.

Apr 4-6, 1998: Chattanooga Choo Choo rare mile-age trip Orlando FL-Chattanooga TN. 4-car Super-liner special over CSX. Pulls directly into Chatta. Choo-Choo Holiday Inn. $799 all-inclusive. Amer-ican Rail Tours Inc, 7429 Faculty Dr, Orlando FL 32807. Phone 407-677-6366.

Send large SASE to addresses. One listing in RTN is free. It must give specific dates of opera-tion. Excursion of the Month appears once a month, in alternate issues. Write: Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 or E-mail to rtn@trainweb.com or rtnews1@ix.netcom.com

CARS & CONSISTS

***Twilight Shoreliner**, train 67, Boston July 12 (from Alan Feinstein's article): engines 228 & 217 (off at New Haven for AEM-7 electrics); cars 1567 mail & express (no checked baggage), 21693 Amcoach I, 20044 Amcafe, 21687 & 21634 Amcoaches I, 44943 Custom Class, 28391 dinette-lounge, 62048 Viewliner slpr "Wayside View", last two with special decals and window band.

***Southwest Chief**, train 3 of Jul 11 (from computer): engines 64, 67 & 93 (P42s); cars 1517 & 1536 express, 1528 MHC-mail Fri & Sun only, 1404 & 1522 MHCs-mail, 1427 & 1505 MHCs-mail to Oakland, 1508 MHC-mail to Oakland, overflow, 1433 MHC-mail, 1176 baggage, 39016 Superliner II transition-dorm, coaches 34058, 34132 & 34046, smoking coach 31520, 33038 lounge, 38048 diner, sleepers 32038 & 32067. (10 head-end, 9 psgr cars.) Same, Jul 9: engines 98 & 99 (P42s) & 813 (P40); cars 1452 & 1509 MHCs-mail, 1448 & 1556 MHCs-mail to Oakland, 1512 MHC-mail to Oakland, overflow, 1533 MHC-mail, 1186 baggage, Superliner II 39012 transition-dorm, coaches 34076, 34090 & 34133, smoking coach 31529, lounge 33025, diner 38021, slprs 32080 & 32085.(Engines 98 & 99 are the last of the second order of P42s.)—Adron Hall.

***Keystone Service** train 649, Paoli PA July 17: engine 101 (P42); cars 21063, 44668 & 21678 coaches. (Engine 101 is from the 3rd order of P42s and is lettered "Northeast Corridor" in blue at eye level under cab windows.)

***Pennsylvanian**, train 44, Pitts-burgh PA July 17: engine 38 (P42); cars 20236 dinette/custom, 21126, 44234 & 21168 coaches. (Engine had a bashed-in nose and plow.)

***Ann Rutledge**, train 304, Kansas City MO July 16: engine 516 (B32-8); cars 43027 custom/cafe, 54544, 54543, 54533 Hori-zon coaches, plus 5 priv. cars picked up at St. Louis, all painted green with silver striping. (As we backed into a track at the original Un-ion Station to pick them up, our B32-8 went dead, and after a half-hour wait P42 #80 came to the rescue, pulling us to the station plat-forms. As passengers detrained, 516 was placed in a siding and 80 became our power. We then backed again to pick up the priv. cars. I was only able to get two names—"Osage Ri-ver" & "Missouri River", as the view was par-tially blocked. The conductor said they were St. Louis Car Co. cars used in excursion service. We were now 3hrs late, so couldn't get them in Chicago either.—Jim Langan.)

SHORELINER (continued from page 11)

Baltimore. The omelet is very nice. I can tell that the FDA onboard service standards are having their effect: the attendant checks food temperature with a thermometer. Finishing after New Carrollton, I have just enough time to pack up my bags before an eight-minute-early arrival in Washington Union Station. The early arrival means that I don't have to wait until 7:20 AM for the **Vermonter**; I jump onto the **Mayflower**, just across the platform, and get a head start on a good day's sleep on my way home to New Jersey.

The **Twilight Shoreliner** has been a pleasant experience. Much thought has gone into maintaining the utility of the coach section, with its constant on-off traffic, while providing a quiet and comfortable trip for the longer-distance passengers in Custom Class and the Viewliner. A definite improvement on the old **Night Owl**, the **Twilight Shoreliner** is, as its brochure claims, an "unexpected departure" along the East Coast.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

The debate that has followed Professor Thompson's earlier letter would be hilarious if there weren't so much at stake, and the problem is less with what Prof. Thompson said than with what he (and others, most notably Mr. Haswell) omitted. Prof. Thompson reflects a classic academic perspective on a public policy issue when he advocates allocating public subsidies (capital and operating) to those travel markets where the "social costs" would be recovered. He sees that possibility occurring in only the highest density population areas and in short distance corridors. He dismisses long distance trains as "luxury cruise trains" through rural areas with no contribution to social welfare and no economic foundation.

What is missing from this point of view, however, is any hard experience of running a business that caters to customers to earn a positive return on an investment of capital. Professor Thompson touts the NEC without any mention of some of the hard economic and financial facts about it.

He does not seem to grasp that the NEC, whatever its social utility, is the least productive application of capital to rail passenger transportation this country has ever seen (outside of some quirky footnotes such as the 1970s experiments in West Virginia and the Florio excursion to Atlantic City). For an investment of about $5 billion (in 1997 dollars) the NEC carries essentially the same volume of traffic it did 25 years ago, and loses a steady or slightly growing quarter of a billion dollars a year doing it (in cash; the losses measured by generally accepted accounting principles exceed $1 million a day), Those losses have steadily increased despite Amtrak running up deferred maintenance in the NEC that the United States GAO estimates now amounts to $2 to 3 billion. Prof. Thompson may regard that as a successful and appropriate use of public transportation capital, but I don't. I believe that public capital can be invested in other services that can produce much higher returns.

Another point missing from Prof. Thompson's letter is a measure of utility of public investment in transportation. He implies that the measure of success is body count, but he can't be serious. By his measure, the New York City subway is the world's most successful rail passenger system. The only true measure of output in a transportation system is ton miles or passenger miles. What is the return on federal investment in Amtrak's various segments measured by revenue passenger miles? Professor Thompson doesn't tell us and there is good reason, because that answer reverses the conclusion that comes from an academic and sociometric bias or intuitive supposition that trains only 'work' in high density corridors. We are all for density, but measured by RPMs, not bodycount. By this measure, a Superliner trainset is the most productive use of labor and capital that Amtrak has ever devised.

The Western Superliner train has a far better ratio of staff to customers than a Metroliner, and much greater revenue productivity. It is no accident that the highest revenue producing single train Amtrak operates is the **Empire Builder**, which traverses a demographic wilderness, but happens to have the highest average trip length in the system. This one route grossed $60+ million a year before the stupid Mercer cutback plan was implemented by Tom Downs.

The disastrous failure of the Mercer plan, which NARP cheered and Amtrak swallowed hook, line, and sinker, illustrates another point missing from Prof. Thompson's perspective. The long distance network is emphatically not functional as either a once in a while luxury cruise experience or as a fancy commodity bus surrogate for disadvantaged rural markets. It functions only as a network of daily trains serving a dense matrix of origin-destination (O&D) pairs and catering to mainstream, middle class Americans. The current weakness of traffic on both the **California Zephyr** and the **Eagle** (Amtrak's answer to the unlisted phone number) illustrates what happens to formerly productive long haul trains when the density of O&D pairs falls below a critical value. The entire national network of basic long haul trains suffers from this lack of interconnectivity, which deprives them of critical mass density of O&D pairs. These are failings that Tom Downs could rectify almost overnight if he understood how to run a networked transportation business rather than a point to point transit line.

The immediate dropoffs in traffic Amtrak has experienced every time it has downgraded long haul services to bus levels shows conclusively that commodity corridor service is not what the customer wants to pay for in most of the country. Remember the Rima Parkhurst meal fiasco of 1979-80? Notice what happened to **Eagle** traffic *sans* sleepers and diner this spring?

Another point missing from Prof. Thompson's and Mr. Haswell's argument is the cost and benefit to be derived from short corridor development. The capital cost of these projects is enormous, and to achieve ridership levels that even remotely begin to justify the capital investment will require multiple frequencies, car-competitive trip times, a professional and dedicated labor force, easy parking access, and effective information systems. If the NEC teaches us anything at all about efficient use of rail resources, it is that deploying these disciplines is vastly expensive and not terribly remunerative by any scale, financial or social. Even on a social scale, Amtrak's entire traffic in the NEC spine (outside of the 90 mile local market between Philadelphia and NY) could be fully accommodated by using 757 aircraft instead of DC-9s on existing air shuttle services, and launching 5 buses an hour each way in the peak hours, which would hardly tax the capacity of I-95. That social saving, however aesthetically or environmentally attractive it might be, hardly justifies the billion dollar a year combined total cost to the taxpayer of the current NEC. And that's Prof. Thompson's best case.

A much better lesson for corridor development can be found in Illinois and California, where incremental development of conventional speed services on modest capital investment, is beginning to show results. The Southwest Corridor's current positive cash flow is an indication of the potentials that exist, and a stark contrast to the unrelenting and very large scale cash losses in the NEC.

The issue is not one of geographic equity or bias. It is one of maximizing the return on investment of scarce public capital, measured by objective, rational and appropriate criteria. We agree with much of Prof. Thompson's innate understanding of the potential that rail has to offer. But it is clear that, measured by financial, economic, or sheer output criteria, he and Mr. Haswell, and the transit politicians who run Amtrak, could not be more wrong about where those investment opportunities lie in the near term.

Andrew C. Selden
VP-Law and Policy
United Rail Passenger Alliance
Minneapolis MN

Your information about train 66 on p. 17 of RTN 569 made me laugh till I cried bitter tears because of my experience on July 17. It convinced me that CSX is not on your or Amtrak's mailing list.

My daughter and I had gone to Washington DC to visit Congressman Jon Fox (R) on the House Transportation Committee. As Metroliner fares are beyond our budget, we planned to return to 30th St on train 66 with departure from Union Station at 8:45pm. When we looked at the arrival screen at 7pm, it showed that train 80, the CAROLINIAN, due from Charlotte at 5:55 and train 66, the TWILIGHT SHORELINER, due from Newport News at 8pm both had "unknown" arrival times.

We went to supper, returned to the screen at 8:00 to find that train 80 would be due in at 8:40 and that train 66's arrival time was still "unknown". At 8:30 we could see some activity behind the locked doors separating the concourse from the train gate, but the staff there told us nothing. I made a guess that, with an 8:40 arrival, a prompt engine change and equipment check could have us out of there by 9:05.

The guard opened the gate at 8:55 and shouted that only special-needs persons should come forward at that time. By now, I knew from my scanner that CSX had delayed both trains by placing freights in front of them, but the gate guard told us nothing and the station PA, located behind where we were standing, was unintelligible.

At 9:00 the guard opened the gate, only to close it in our faces when the first passengers through it started to run. Other than to scold us like a teacher in a school yard at recess, the guard told us nothing. After yelling at us to walk slowly, the guard opened the gate G at 9:02.

When we reached the platform, the New York crew informed us that the empty cars were up ahead and to please board rapidly but safely. As the conductor gave the head end permission to head out of the station at 9:06, I

hoped that no one was left behind. He came on the PA, announced that the delay was due to freight train interference south of Washington. He apologized for the 2 ½-hour delay and announced estimated arrival times at the stops scheduled, and that the train would be making an unscheduled stop at Aberdeen. No reason for this stop was given. On my scanner, I heard him tell SETEC that two members of this crew, including the brakeman, would expire before the estimated time of arrival in New York at 12:05, so re-crewing was set up for Philadelphia.

In my opinion, the rails between Richmond VA and Washington DC should be purchased by Congress and sold to Amtrak, for without dispatching control of this trunk that "links the nation with the South", any through service eastbound from Washington (other than Metroliners that originate there) is a bad joke.

Burton Eisenberg
Wyncote PA

Thank you for mentioning the new Denver-Raton, New Mexico Thruway Bus serice in RTN 569. ColoRail members and not only pleased about the new route connecting Amtrak to previously unserved Colorado Springs and Pueblo, but are also excited about the new service to so many attractive destinations in New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California. The new dedicated bus connection at Raton also makes it possible for travelers to make circle trips utilizing the bus along with the SOUTHWEST CHIEF, COAST STARLIGHT and CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR. The bus traverses I-25, which provides outstanding views of the front range of the Rocky Mountains that are either brightly illuminated by the morning sun (southbound run) or serve as backdrops for spectacular sunsets (northbound run). The bus rider will also see the SOUTHWEST CHIEF making its way slowly through the torturous grades on Raton Pass. We greatly appreciate Amtrak's initiation of this service, and ask RTN readers to try it.

Jon Esty, President
ColoRail
Denver CO

I'm glad to learn that there's at least one other person (Michael Koch, letters, RTN 569) who feels the same way as I do about passenger train amenities, or lack thereof. Too many rail supporters accept whatever crumbs Amtrak tosses their way (e.g., the MAPLE LEAF, which travels nearly 12 hours with no diner, parlor, custom class or lounge), and profess that any train is better than no train at all. I strongly disagree. I'd no more ride the THREE SEWERS (trains 40 and 41; I'll refer to it by its correct name the minute it gets a proper sleeper and diner) than I'd ride a Greyhound bus or hitchhike. If Amtrak wants to run trains in the style of SP in the Benjamin Biaggini era, let someone else ride them.

Is it coincidence that McDonald's has outlets in three NEC stations (Washington, Philadelphia and Boston; there may be more by now)? I'm no fan of the golden arches, but I'll take a Big Mac any day over a microwaved hockey puck that Amtrak dares to call a "hamburger." If there's anything more barbaric than a stand-up snack bar at 125mph, I have yet to find it. Even Pennsy fielded diners on most NEC trains to within a couple years of the end.

I've ridden well over 100,000 miles by rail and there's nary an overnight coach trip to my name—nor will there ever be one. If a sleeping car is not available, my response is to fly, drive or stay home. After all, they didn't call them *day* coaches for nothing.

If you can't do it right, Amtrak, don't do it at all.

Tom Hoffman
Rockville MD

Commenting on various reports in RTN 569:

First, Adron Hall's "Amtrak New Orleans Hub is Busy": Re: equipment utilization. The CITY OF NEW ORLEANS lays over one day plus 23 hours for normal maintenance and cleaning, and longer if needed for heavier maintenance. Note that this is the same consist that appeared in your Cars & Consists column in the same issue, arriving in Seattle on train 7 on May 23. It ran as #8/59 May 23-26, #58/7 May 28-31 and #8/59 May 31-June 3 with the 2-day plus 23 hours layover to leave again on June 6. Ten sets of equipment are needed, two of which are maintenance—the 3% factor, which is consistent with the Eastern long-distance trains requiring 21 sets, three of which are maintenance.

The CITY/BUILDER lays over in Chicago Union Station for interim cleaning on the eastern-most platform track, one of two through tracks from the north to south on the east side of the station. The train pulls down so that the passenger cars are at the north platform for unloading. Power and MHCs are then moved to the mail platforms south in the station, then the 3-unit powewr moves to 21st St yard. The replacement 2-unit set then moves the train to the south platform for boarding. I observed these moves personally on July 10, while waiting aboard my CAPITAL /CHIEF on the adjacent stub-end south track, which is cleaned at this platform after a back-in movement.

The second car in the consist was 39011, the transition-dorm, not 34011, which was converted to snack-bar coach 35004 in 1984, also consistent with the May 23 consist. Cars 33017 to 32006 are the Portland section, and 34022 a deadhead to Chicago from the New Orleans "specials".

I believe New Orleans maintenance is converting the coach-baggage cars to coach/smokers. I know New Orleans also fumigates food service cars on a periodic basic to comply with FDA regulations. This could account for the extra equipment there. They were doing this on the west side of the station last year.

Secondly, with changes in consists for the CARDINAL and TEXAS EAGLE, it looks as if they are candidates for through routing (if not already a fact), with four sets required. The same could be said for the 448/449 Boston LAKE SHORE and the new TWILIGHT SHORELINER which could run through Boston with six sets and maintenance at either Boston or Chicago. That brings us to 40/41, the THREE RIVERS. It needs a diner and sleeper, not an all-night bar/smoker. Viewliner prototype 2301 has been assigned to the SHORELINER, so where is 2300? The original 18-set plan for Eastern long-distance trains included 40/41, but not 448/449. Add six Viewliners for 448/449-66/67 and it still leaves four for maintenance. The question becomes: are the Viewliners not that consistently available or is this a "gas tax" ploy for Congress?

Next, I was surprised as your reporter was about a P42 running through to New York on the LAKE SHORE. This means separating the lead loco at Rensselaer in both directions for the Boston sections insertion. Saves time? Even with the P42 coasting into New York, the station switcher would still have to take the trainset to Sunnyside for turning and then jaul the next (different) set back. No. 48 turns to become 97. There are enough P32s now to keep the old arrangement until the new power arrives in spring 1998, when plans are to use all 18 for the entire runs in Empire Service (no changes at Rensselaer), which would leave only about 20 F40s in the Northeast out of New Haven.

Lastly, the bus connection at Raton NM from Denver is a TNM&O/Greyhound. We had the Scouts for Philmont Ranch on our train, who are moved to the ranch on local school buses. The TNM&O bus moved south on I-25, alongside our train route, and because it doesn't have to climb Glorieta Pass was long gone and possibly becomes the El Paso connection at Albuquerque. The "problem": I-25 passes on the outskirts of Santa Fe and could "kill" the Lamy stop of trains 3&4. Be careful, Amtrak!

A note to railfan mileage collectors: If visiting Santa Fe, consider Santa Fe Southern's mixed run to Lamy with lunch at the "Legal Tender", a national historic site across from Lamy station. Train fare is separate and the menu is reasonable. The bar serves both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, as well as "tapas" for lighter fare. There is enough time for a leisurely lunch and eastbound BNSF intermodal #151 picture-taking. SFS's train leaves before #3&4 arrive, so you can't use the service inbound. Amtrak sells tickets for the Lamy Shuttle vans. The train runs Tu-Th-Sa-Su, plus an evening run on Friday nights.

James L. Langan
New Monmouth NJ.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Ride the damned bus!"
—Bumper sticker on a Volkswagen convertible, seen in Berkeley in July.

"An analysis by Oregon, Washington and British Columbia transportation officials—not rail officials—shows a dramatic difference in costs. Adding one lane to I-5 in each direction for the 185 miles between Portland and Seattle would cost $6.5 million a mile. Upgrading track and roadbed for higher train speeds would cost about $2.7 million a mile.

"Moreover, when population growth and usage requires additional capacity, trains don't have to build even more lanes; they can simply hook up more cars.

"Of course, highways carry more people than trains. That's going to be the case despite gains in rail ridership—unless something interrupts the nation's pipelines to foreign oil. Such an interruption took place with the OPEC embargo in the 1970s and was threatened by the Persian Gulf War in the 1980s.

"This nation must have high-capacity alternatives to foreign petroleum dependency. Passenger rail is one such alternative."

—From editorial in The (Portland) Oregonian, July 14.

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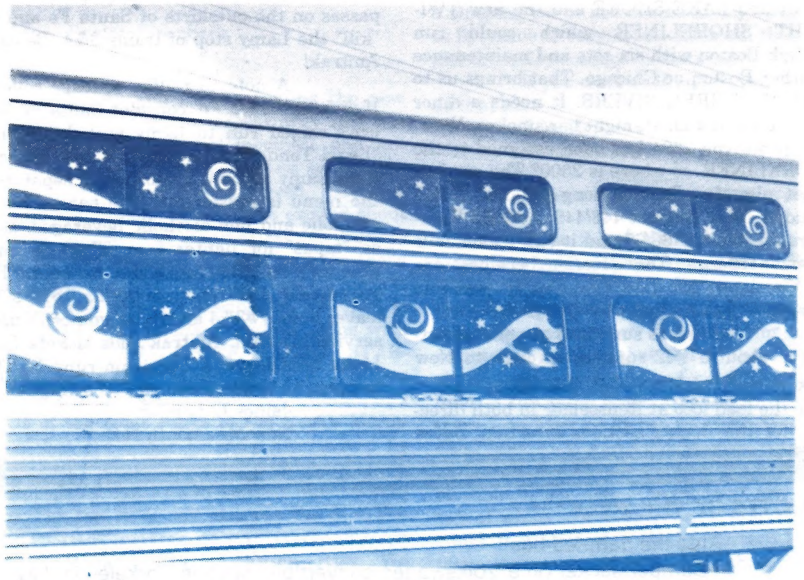

25 YEARS AGO IN RTN

(RTN 40, July 17, 1972): Amtrak gave the go-ahead on July 28 to contractors to begin installation of a $7 million advanced nationwide information and reservation system for intercity rail passengers. Amtrak expects the system to be fully operational within two years; the Northeast will begin in summer of 1973, the Southeast the latter part of 1973, and the West and Midwest by late 1974.

The first Seattle-Vancouver BC Amtrak train ran July 17. Amtrak has named the train the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. The pre-Amtrak BN train was called the INTERNATIONAL. The first train carried four cars, all in Amtrak paint and all packed with passengers. Arrival at Vancouver was 45 minutes late. The consist was a snack-coach and coaches. On later rruns, a dome coach was also used.

Eastern rail advocates were stunned when the RF&P Railroad announced on July 12 that it would be impossible to run commuter trains along with freight on its Northern Virginia lines.

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This video has some flaws, but it's the only film we'll ever have of the SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS, shot in 1991 a few weeks before this unusual train's discontinuance.

When we receive your remittance of only $69 for 72 issues (a bargain in itself!), plus $3 for shipping costs, we will mail you this unusual video production.

The video is available in VHS size only. It is 33 minutes in duration, in color and natural sound. An especially interesting feature of the film is a variety of wonderful train horns, including Amtrak, Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, SIERRA 49ER EXPRESS, and SP maintenance of way equipment. On the 49ER you'll see the company's own domes and rebuilt bi-level commuter cars as well as leased AMERICAN-EUROPEAN EXPRESS cars.

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